



TIPS FOR BICYCLE SAFETY



RIDE RIGHT is the safety program developed by RAGBRAI®. The program name has a double meaning. Bicyclists are urged to ride on the right side of the road AND ride correctly according to traffic laws. The safety program follows the intent of the name.

As you read this guide you should keep in mind that bicyclists in Iowa have the same rights and duties as the operators of vehicles according to the Code of Iowa. Understanding Iowa's traffic laws and how the laws apply to bicycling is important. But the laws by themselves don't provide all the tips to riding a bicycle safely and enjoyably.

The Ride Right Guide compiles the tips on how safely to ride bicycles in Iowa — whether on the week of RAGBRAI® or during other times of the year.

BIKE FIT AND SELECTION

Invest in a well-serviced bicycle that fits. The best option to buy a bicycle is a local bicycle retail store. Find a list of stores at <http://iowabicyclecoalition.org/bikeshops> . Many people purchase used bicycles or borrow one from a friend. If you are going to purchase a used bicycle, get a tuneup at a bike shop.

Bicycles are made in different sizes. A tall person needs a larger bicycle, a short person needs a smaller bicycle. One of the simple ways to measure if a bicycle fits is standover height which is something you can measure yourself. Standover height means you stand over the top tube and lift the bicycle 1-2" from the ground. If you cannot lift the bike up 1-2" or you lift more than 2" than the bike is too big or too small for you. For a more exact bike fit, visit your local bicycle retailer and schedule a fitting session.



DISTRACTIONS

Avoid dangerous distractions while bicycling.

- Slow down, pull over, stop, and then send your text message or answer the phone.
- Earbuds can take away your sense of hearing while riding. Leave your headphones in your bag.
- Some crashes happen because of sand, gravel, branches and other debris. Pay attention to the road or trail surface and be prepared for debris.
- Taking photos or selfies while bicycling is dangerous and should be avoided.



HAND SIGNALS

Use hand signals to let people around you know where you are going.

- Left Turn Hand Signal: Extend your left arm for a left turn.
- Stopping Hand Signal: Bend your elbow 90 degrees with your hand pointed downward for stopping.
- Right Turn Hand Signal: Bend your elbow 90 degrees with your hand pointed upward for a right turn.



HELMET

Wear a helmet that is comfortable, well fitted, and has a CPSC sticker that meets current safety standards.

Your helmet should be adjusted properly to fit your head. Your helmet should be level and cover your forehead. There should only be two fingers width between the bottom of the helmet and your eyebrows. If your helmet has a retention ring, make sure it is snug. Adjust your helmet straps. The straps should meet in a "V" shape just below your ears. You should only fit two fingers between your chin and the helmet chin strap.

Test by shaking your head "no". Your helmet should move with your head and not wiggle independently.

LIGHTS AND NIGHT VISIBILITY

Make sure you are visible, especially at night and in low-light situations. Bicyclists are required by law to have a headlight and taillight or reflector visible from sunset to sunrise. You can do more to be visible at night, like wearing reflective vests or clothing.

HYDRATION

Keep hydrated before, during, and after riding a bicycle. A good rule of thumb is to drink water before you are thirsty. If you feel dehydrated, you probably are.



TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

Stop at stop signs and – most importantly – yield the right-of-way when it is required.

- When stopping, let those behind know of your plans by using hand signals.
- Stopping is especially dangerous at the crest of a hill or on a curve.
- Stop completely at stop signs and stop lights.
- Obey yield signs and yield to cross traffic.



TURNING

Make right and left turns from appropriate positions on the roadway.

- When turning, turn left from the center of the roadway.
- If you are turning right, turn right from the right side of the roadway.
- Do not cut corners.

WHERE TO RIDE

Ride in a predictable manner with respect for others safety.

- Do not cross double yellow lines.
- Ride in the right lane OR as far to the right as practicable.
- You need to expect that everyone around you will not be predictable.
- Ride in a straight line. Be predictable to others riding nearby.



IMPAIRED BICYCLING

Avoid bicycling while impaired. Alcohol can seriously impair your abilities to ride a bicycle. Don't forget medications and physical conditions can also impair your abilities to ride. Weather can create serious problems. Heat or cold can be dangerous. Only ride with the right frame of mind.



CROSSING RAILROAD TRACKS

Use caution when crossing railroad tracks on a bicycle.

- Railroad tracks can be hazardous. Many are very rough and the tracks can be slippery when wet.
- Riders need to cross railroad tracks at right angles otherwise, your tire may catch in the gap between the road and the track.
- Be sure to look both ways for trains.
- Never ride around lowered gates.

ENCOUNTERING EMERGENCY VEHICLES

You may encounter an ambulance, police car, or fire truck when riding. Always pull to the right and stop for emergency vehicles. If you are ever in a crash, you will hope others show your responding ambulance, fire truck, or police the same courtesy.



RAGBRAI[®] AND GROUP RIDE SPECIFIC TIPS

RAGBRAI[®] is a large part of Iowa bicycling culture. It remains the world's largest, longest, and oldest week-long bicycle touring event. Over 10,000 bicyclists ride across Iowa every July. RIDE RIGHT was designed for RAGBRAI[®], but many of the guidelines apply to non-event bicycling. There are a few things that aren't common to everyday bicycling and maybe more specific to the big event.

PACELINES

Riding in a paceline is dangerous and could cause crashes. If you cross wheels, you will likely crash and so with others around you. Ride to the right and leave room for others to pass on your left.



COMMUNICATIONS

Call out your intentions when starting, stopping, turning or passing.

- **"Bike On"** means a rider is entering the roadway.
- **"Bike Off"** means you will be slowing and pulling onto the shoulder.
- **"Stopping"** means you will be stopping on the roadway.
- **"Slowing"** means riders will be slowing their pace.
- **"On Your Left"** means you are passing or being passed on the left side.
- **"On Your Right"** means you are passing on the right side.
- **"Turning Right", "Turning Left"** is said when making turns at intersections.



TRAFFIC CONTROL ON RAGBRAI®

RAGBRAI® doesn't mean the traffic rules are suspended. The roads are open to trucks and cars even during RAGBRAI®. If an intersection is being directed by a law enforcement officer, follow instructions of the officer. If no officer is present, follow the traffic control sign or signal.



GROUP RIDING

Riding in a group of bicyclists requires extra caution and awareness.

- Look around, see where others are while riding.
- Judge pace and distance of others nearby.
- Communicate with other riders.
- Ride at your own pace.
- Make sure you stop and take adequate breaks along the way.





CENTERLINE

Avoid riding in the center of the road. Roads are sometimes constructed with expansion joints in the center of the road. Gaps on the road can produce gaps wide enough to swallow a bicycle tire. In addition to the centerline area avoid any part of the road with lateral cracks.

RIGHT ATTITUDE

Have the right attitude when riding on RAGBRAI®.

- RAGBRAI® is not a race.
- When you hear "on your left", continue to ride forward in straight line. If possible, move to the right or ride single file.
- Stay on the marked route.



SAG

If you cannot pedal any more or your bicycle, body, or spirit becomes broken, use the SAG service.

- Turn your bicycle upside down, and wait for the SAG to drive past.
- Wave and give the thumbs down sign to signal you need SAG services.
- You may be exhausted and frustrated, but remember the SAG driver is here to help you.
- You may not get into camp until the end of the day or when the SAG is full.



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